

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DoD BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SOCIAL MEDIA OPERATIONS  
MARINE CORPS' FORWARD PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC

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Tuesday, June 11, 2013

PARTICIPANTS:

**Moderator:**

WILLIAM SELBY

**Guests:**

BRIGADIER GENERAL RICHARD SIMCOCK  
Deputy Commander of Marine Forces Pacific

MICHELLE COWELL  
*Military Matters*

RITA BOLAND  
*SIGNAL Magazine and SIGNALScape*

ANDREW LUBIN  
*Leatherneck Magazine*

CHUCK SIMMINS  
*America's North Shore Journal*

DALE KISSINGER  
*Military Avenue*

RICHARD LOWRY  
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*National Defense Magazine*

GAIL HARRIS  
Foreign Policy Association

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## PROCEEDINGS

MR. SEBLEY: I'd like to welcome you to the Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday, June 11, 2013. My name is William Sebley with the Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call.

Today, we are honored to have, as our guest, Brigadier General Richard Simcock, the Deputy Commander of Marine Forces Pacific, to discuss the Marine Corps rebalance toward the Pacific. The Command is the largest in the Marine Corps, with approximately 83,000 marines and sailors supporting missions such as the defense of South Korea and Japan.

A note to the bloggers on the line today: Please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question, respect the General's time, and keep your questions succinct and to the point. And if you're not asking a question, we've asked that you please place your phone on mute.

With that, sir, the floor is yours for your opening statement.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: William, thank you. Appreciate the introduction, and, to all, good morning. I won't say that it's a pleasure to be back here in D.C., because I left paradise to come here, but good to be back, anyway.

Let me just, very quickly, say that in the year that I have been at Marine Forces Command, what I have seen is a very dynamic and evolving Pacific region. There's a lot of reasons why it has been characterized as dynamic and evolving, and I'm sure we'll talk a lot about that.

But let me just say that, first, some things have not changed, in that the United States is still a Pacific nation. We are still present and engaged in the Pacific. The size of the Pacific has not changed. It is still vast. And we have our bumper sticker that our particular area of operation is from Hollywood to Bollywood, from penguins to polar bears. And the challenge is to engage throughout the region with more and more of our partners, new and old, and, also, maintain our relations and engagements with our treaty allies, five of which that do reside in the Pacific.

One of the things that we're constantly asked about from those nations is, they're concerned about our commitment and our presence in the region. They see what's going on in the world, they look at the current fiscal crisis that our nation is undergoing, and they want to be reassured that their region is important to us. And they want to make sure that our presence will remain as it has for -- arguably since World War II -- of providing that security to the region, of which every country in the region has benefitted from.

And that is what leads me back to how I started off, where it is dynamic and evolving, and it is requiring us to also evolve, and go to new

directions, engage more with new partners, and find avenues that countries can use to participate fully -- to their fullest, anyway, within a security cooperation that we use in engaging throughout the region.

Last thing I will say to you before I open it up for questions: We do a lot on a day-to-day basis throughout the region from an exercise standpoint. And Marine Corps is specific -- we do about 100 different exercises throughout the region -- with the Pacific Command, over 170 different exercises. This is one of our main tools of engagement, from a mill-to-mill standpoint, in what we do throughout the region.

Key point I tell you about -- the way that we did business in the past was more of a bilateral nature, where it was just us and one other country. That's changing. That's part of the evolving nature of the region -- where now it's a multilateral, and we're taking old exercises, and expanding them into a multilateral aspect -- which is challenging in itself, because people come to the exercises with varying degrees of capability. The challenge is to make an exercise, to design an exercise that facilitates each of the participants to accomplish their training objectives and their goals.

And, to date, we've been fairly success with that, and that's one of the aspects of how the region is changing.

Let me stop there, and give you all the opportunity to ask the specific questions that you have. And I look forward to those questions.

MR. SEBLEY: Thank you, sir. And somebody else joined us?

MS. COWELL: Bill, this is Michelle.

MR. SEBLEY: Okay. Michelle, I'm not sure if it's you, but there's some background noise coming from there. It might not be you, but could you please -- everybody, make sure their phone is on mute if you're not asking a question.

Rita, you were first on the line, so you can go ahead with your question.

MS. BOLAND: Okay, thank you. And thank you, General, for talking with us today. My name's Rita Boland. I'm from *SIGNAL Magazine* and *SIGNALScape*. And I was wondering if you could tell us about how cyber warfare concerns are affecting your rebalancing and partnering decisions.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, that's a great question, Rita. Thank you. I mean, cyber, right now, is characterized by many as the battle space of the future. It permeates just about everything that we do. And that is an aspect that,

as we go into not just our daily operations, but the exercises that we go into, it's a large concern for us.

But, as I mentioned earlier, different countries have different capabilities, different abilities to safeguard their cyber networks. But we have to find ways with dealing, in some cases, longstanding treaty allies -- to involve them, again, in operations and exercises, in a way that -- we want to be open and share information, but, on the same hand, have to be able to safeguard that information that we share with partners and friends, because, as you well know, not everyone in the Pacific is necessarily our friend.

So, it's one of those challenges. It is something we must deal with. It's not just the future; it's today. It's how we do business. And ensuring that those partners have the correct security measures in place sometimes causes us to do certain workarounds in order to be successful.

But that's a great question, and it is, again, one of the challenges we deal with on a daily basis.

MR. SEBLEY: Thanks, Rita.

MS. BOLAND: Thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: Thank you for your question, Rita. And Andrew Lubin, you are next.

MR. LUBIN: General, Andrew Lubin, of *Leatherneck Magazine*. It's good to talk to you again, soon.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Good to hear from you, Andrew.

MR. LUBIN: General, we've got Dawn Blitz coming up on the West Coast -- typically a Marine-Japanese bilateral exercise. Now we've got Australians and New Zealanders. What are they looking to add to the operation, and what can we help them with?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, thank you for that question, Andrew.

Dawn Blitz is, as you say, usually a case in point about how what was historically a bilateral exercise expanding into a multilateral exercise. Let me talk just a little bit about the Japanese; then I'll go to your question with the Australians and the New Zealanders.

This exercise just with the Japanese is not business as usual. This year's Dawn Blitz show has three Japanese amphibious ships that have sailed

from Japan, stopped in at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, where I had the opportunity to meet with the commander of that amphibious force -- a two-star admiral.

I also had the opportunity to speak with the commander of the ground force that's embarked on those ships -- a two-star general. And that, in itself -- to have Japanese ground forces embarked on Japanese amphibious ships -- is something very, very new to them. And they are looking at ways that they can build their amphibious forces to be more capable, number one, throughout the region, and yet they're coming to us, to ask to be trained, so that they can ensure that, as those forces develop, they are compatible with us -- which is critically important -- that, as countries in the region develop those amphibious forces, that we remain compatible so that we can work together.

That's just the Japanese piece of it. Your question dealt, specifically, now with including Australians and New Zealanders. And much of what I just said about the Japanese is applicable to the Australians and New Zealanders, also, as they develop amphibious capabilities -- because a lot of the exercises -- and Dawn Blitz is an example -- it's not always that people come and participate, initially; sometimes, they'll come as observers, and see how we're doing operations, so that they can start bringing their forces to a level where they can, in fact, participate. In Australia's case, that's absolutely true, because they will be acquiring two amphibious ships in the very near future.

Neither one of these countries have a Marine Corps, but yet all of those countries have come to us, and asked to be trained in looking for a Marine Corps-like capability. That's really what they're looking for, because they have seen firsthand, in either exercises or real-world operations, such as Operation Tomodachi -- the humanitarian assistance in Japan -- the value of amphibious forces, and what they can do throughout the entire region.

I would just add, as I said, that that's true with the Australians. But with Dawn Blitz, as you said, New Zealand -- and, also, you left out -- Canada is a country that's participating in that exercise, also.

But again -- last point; I didn't mean to go on so -- but it's a prime example of an exercise where, historically, limited in scope and scale with only a bilateral in nature, expanding multilateral and involving many, many more countries. And their ability to transit the Pacific -- you know, from the Far East, to come all the way to the West Coast to participate in this exercise. They wouldn't do it just, obviously, out of the goodness of their hearts; it's important for them to be there, and they're literally putting their money where their mouth is to get their forces out to the West Coast to train with our units.

So, I went too long on my answer, but that is a prime example of some of the things that we're seeing out in the Pacific. So, thank you for that question.

MR. LUBIN: Thank you very much.

MR. SEBLEY: And Chuck, you're next.

MR. SIMMINS: Thank you for speaking with us, General. Chuck Simmins, from *America's North Shore Journal*.

Our relationship with Japan right now, especially vis-à-vis the Marine Corps, is a little complex, with Okinawa in the mix, with the Japanese problem, with China encroaching. And now we're doing amphibious exercises with the Japanese.

Can you go into a little more characterization of how Okinawa and the Marine Corps in general fits in with our foreign policy goals towards Japan?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, Chuck. That's a great question. I mean, as you well know, obviously from -- I glean from your question -- we have a very, very long history and alliance with Japan, and our presence in Japan, and our presence in Okinawa -- critically important to what we're doing out in the Pacific.

You talked about, you know, Japanese relations. I would just comment that I don't think that Japanese-American relations have been better throughout that long history than they are right now. There's several reasons for that.

I mentioned Operation Tomodachi and the work that we did together -- our two countries -- in response to that disaster. Again, it gave us the chance to work together, show the value of amphibious forces -- what they can do, in this particular case, from a humanitarian assistance disaster relief operation. But it goes much further than that.

We talked a little bit about Dawn Blitz, and what we're doing in that regard. But the value of Japan as a treaty ally -- more important, probably, today than it's ever been -- and it's always been important.

And a lot of people think that because of the rebalance that we're doing in the Pacific -- and some of the force posture movements that we're doing, as far as just our distributed lay-down -- there's, I think, a misconception out there that in some way, shape, or form, that we're reducing our engagement with Japan. That is not true. No doubt that we're moving forces around in the region -- and, again, because the region is changing in dynamic, we must also be adjusting to meet the needs of the region. Okinawa -- the country of Japan still play a vital role in the region, and U.S. interests, and the things that we want to do out there.

Some things have not changed, and that is the value of Okinawa and Japan to our forward-deployed forces. It is so critical for us -- and I talked about the vastness of the Pacific. If we did not have the forces already positioned forward, it would just add to a timeline when a crisis occurs -- be it manmade or Mother Nature. The point to solving a crisis is being able to respond in a timely

manner -- to being able to do it quickly. And Okinawa, and Japan, and our forces forward-deployed there play directly into reinforcing our ability to do that.

Additionally, it provides a deterrent from a security aspect that we -- you know, I talked about the region wanting to be reassured about our commitment and our presence. Those forward-deployed forces do just that.

So, in wrapping up to your question, our relations -- us and Japan - - stronger than ever, and it still plays a critical role throughout the region, from our perspective.

MR. SIMMINS: Thank you, sir.

MR. SEBLEY: And Dale.

MR. KISSINGER: Good morning, sir. This is Dale Kissinger, from *Military Avenue*. I would like to ask a question about military families.

The Pacific rebalance for the Marines is going to create turbulence for Marine families. Can you give us how many people will be PCS'd and moved around in the region because of the rebalance?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. I talked a little bit about that on Chuck's question about how we're going to redistribute some of our forces throughout the region, to better address the challenges that we face out there.

One of the things that I find throughout the region is that sovereignty is very important to the countries throughout. And there aren't a lot of countries out there that are looking to have permanently-based military forces in their country. What they're very much interested in is a rotational presence, to come to their countries, train with their forces, make their forces more capable and more compatible with our own, which we are also -- that benefits us to do, but not from a permanent basing standpoint -- and to your question, where we would be permanently placing military families -- dependents -- in these countries, to cause more hardship on our marines and sailors.

What we're doing is going back to the way that we did business in the Pacific ever since I've been in the Marine Corps. And that's through deployments in a rotational manner. Many of our deployments are based on six-month deployments, like we used to do so much with our unit deployment program, which we're starting back up -- and using these things -- globally-sourced type units -- these aren't all coming out of one place. They wouldn't all be coming from Japan, or all be coming from Hawaii, but they're coming from throughout globally-sourced, to come out, rotate into the Pacific region, conduct the training with the countries throughout, show the presence, show the commitment, do the type of things with these countries that they so much want to do -- and we want to do, also.



But it's not going to be that huge demand and impact on the military families. It's just going to be, you know, the UDP type of unit deployment program that we have done in the past.

Dale, thank you for that question.

MR. KISSINGER: Oh, you're very welcome. Thank you for your answer.

Would that have an impact on the military families, though, the Marine families facing longer TDY deployments, rotations? Have you prepared the families for those things? I mean, we've had 11 years of war, and their Marines have been gone a long time.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: They have; you're absolutely right. But, on the other hand, you know, this is what we do. And, you know, from day one, when you come into the Marine Corps, you can expect to deploy. And, you know, I don't mean to take that as a hardship, because that's a huge selling point for the Marine Corps. Marines come to the Marine Corps to do just that.

And I think that families understand. You know, their husbands and/or wives are Marines. That's what they do. I think we're seeing that the family supports their Marines in doing these type of things. But the deployments, they will continue.

The model hasn't changed. We're not coming up with something new that is unique to the Pacific. What we're doing is a model that we've been using in the Marine Corps as long as I've been a Marine, and that's doing those six-month deployments that I think are so -- it's something that the Marines expect, and so do the families.

Additionally, we have many family support systems that deal with these types of things. Sure, there are stresses and hardships that come from any type of separation like that, but the Marine Corps has a lot of programs that help family members deal with those stresses.

But, Dale, thank you for that question.

MR. KISSINGER: Thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: And Richard, you're next.

MR. LOWRY: Good morning, General. This is Richard Lowry, with syndicatednews.net. I have a two-part question, and you brushed a little bit on the answer.

Are there any plans underway to augment the new rotations so there will always be an amphibious ready group at sea in the Pacific, or maybe two?

Or are you looking at different unit configurations that would allow you to have a more rapid response to modern crises?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. Richard, thanks for that one. Let me first talk about, you know, augmenting the MEWs.

As I'm sure you're aware, we have one permanently forward-deployed MEW, the 31<sup>st</sup> ARG MEW, that operates out of Japan, that is always out in the Pacific region.

We're always looking at ways -- when MEWs from other areas transit through the Pacific region -- and using that opportunity to use those MEWs to help us with our engagement activities throughout the region.

Additionally -- and I'm going to talk a little bit about what we're doing with our allies and partners -- and in getting them to engage with their assets in the region.

Arguably, since World War II, the United States has provided the bulk of security to the region. Today, we're seeing many more countries that want to be involved and contribute to that security. And we talked a little bit about Japanese assets, and Australian, and New Zealand, and Canada. The list goes on.

And when you talk about more, and getting augmented capabilities, a lot of what we're seeing in the region -- and this is a very good thing -- see our treaty allies and partners wanting to develop those capabilities, wanting to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us, if you will, from a security aspect, and assist in doing those type of activities throughout the region. That is a huge success story in what we're seeing recently here within the Pacific.

But, Richard, thanks; that's a great question.

MR. SEBLEY: Thanks, Richard -- and onto Sandra.

MS. ERWIN: Thank you very much. Good morning, General. Sandra Erwin, with *National Defense Magazine*.

One of the topics that we hear a lot when people talk about the rebalancing to the Pacific is the anti-access area denial threats, and I just kind of wanted to get your take on as you plan training and exercises for the Marine Pacific forces, what do you see as some of the anti-access threats, and how do you prepare for that?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. Sandra, thank you for that question.

One of the best ways that we deal with that is through engagement. And I talked a little bit about how countries within the region are very receptive to the type of engagement that maybe a Marine Corps team brings to a maritime theater such as the Pacific.

We have the advantage of having ship-borne forces able to come to a country for a requisite period of time -- you know, 15, 20 days -- whatever the time period is -- come in, conduct that training, work with their forces, better their capabilities, working, making sure compatibility exists between them and us, and then, at the end of training, to be able to leave.

And that type of engagement and access is what we build upon throughout the region, to ensure the things that you're talking about -- you know, certain countries want to prevent and start to have anti-access area denial type things -- we defeat that through what we call Phase Zero Action -- those actions that are happening right now, today.

And the relationship that we build today, before any crisis hits, pays off tremendously when a crisis occurs -- be that manmade or from nature. But it's what we're doing today in working with those countries on a day-to-day basis that assures us that we will have that access that is so critically important when a crisis strikes.

Sandra, thank you for that. That was a very --

MS. ERWIN: I'm sorry -- just for a quick followup -- why do you think that, when people talk about this subject, they focus on hardening ships? You know, they talk about, you know, some of the naval ships being vulnerable. Why do you think that there's so much focus on hardening the weapon systems or platforms, as opposed to what you're talking about -- the phased (inaudible)?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. I don't think that they're wrong, necessarily, in looking from a hardening, defensive position. That's not incorrect. I first, though, start about -- you know, because, from that position, it's post-crisis. I mean, the action has already taken place, so now we're in a reactive position. I'd like to first start talking about any type of anti-access area denial from before the crisis hits. And doing the actions that we do today prevents those things from happening.

The defensive part of -- you know, you talked about hardening facilities or those types of things. Those aren't wrong actions, by any means. And, obviously, you want to hedge all bets. And if something bad happens, that's not necessarily a wrong thing. But I think the conversation needs to start with the actions that we're taking right now, today, with the countries throughout the region. And those actions, that engagement, those relationships -- those are the things that are going to ensure the access that we will need in the future or when a potential crisis strikes.

MS. ERWIN: Mm-hmm.

MR. SEBLEY: Thank you, and --

MS. ERWIN: Thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: -- onto Gail.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah, Gail Harris, with Foreign Policy Association, General. Thank you for your time.

You've already talked briefly about cyber. I was wondering, what are some of the other top national security threats that keep you up at night?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. Gail, thank you.

I got to be honest with you here -- you know, what keeps me up at night is coffee. I mean, I don't mean to be flippant, by any means --

MS. HARRIS: No, no. I know you're not.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: But I have a very positive outlook on the Pacific. And the reason I do that is, I've lived out there now for the last year. And a lot of my time is dealt with going to the various countries throughout the region, and seeing what they say to me, their desire to -- in case of, for example, our five standing treaty allies. They want to remain treaty allies. They see the benefit of the alliance with the United States.

In addition to those five treaty allies, there are many new partners - - some of them not so new; we've been partnered with before. But we have become solidified with them as their partner of choice, their force of choice. In a region that, as I discussed, that there is sometimes some unsure feelings about what the future may hold, we're a known quantity. We're something that has been there over 70 years, and the countries in the region know that, and rely heavily on us to continue to provide, you know, that type of security and that type of partnership.

So, I'm very optimistic. I don't stay awake at night worrying about some things.

Now are there concerns, are there challenges in the region? Absolutely, and cyber is one of those issues that we're going to have to deal with. There's no doubt about it.

But does it keep me awake at night? Absolutely not, and I'm much more optimistic about the way that we're going right now in the Pacific than, you know, handwringing pessimism about the things that could possibly go wrong -- because, right now, to be honest with you, Gail, everything is in our favor -- the engagements that we've worked so hard to, one, obtain over the years, and continue to work hard to maintain, and to prove and show to the region that the United States never left the Pacific. We've always been there. True, we have had

other concerns over in the other parts of the world that we've had to address, but, by no means, did we ever leave the Pacific.

So --

MS. HARRIS: Well, yeah. I've never thought we left, either. I've spent a lot of time in the Pacific. So, you're content or you're confident that, if North Korea flares up once again, we can keep him contained?

And the crisis with China, in terms of access to what they perceive has to be their sea areas of concern, that type of thing -- you think we're postured pretty well to handle that -- continue to handle that, I should say.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: I'm very confident that we have the plans in place, and the forces that we need to deal with that type of crisis that you discussed. But I would take it even further.

The thing that I'm so optimistic -- not the plans that we have on the show, and not the actions that, you know, enforces that we have, necessarily, there -- what I'm so optimistic about is how we are growing in engagement, how we are growing in the type of involvement we have throughout the region, the influence that we have.

I am always struck, as I tour through the area -- people throughout the region, both civilian and military leaders, talk to me about ensuring that they maintain their engagement with us. That's probably the best measure of effectiveness that I can see -- that they're working as hard as we are to maintain the connection to us. Again, I use the term "we are their force of choice." And that's a very strong position, and something that we don't take lightly, and we work very, very hard, day-to-day basis, to maintain.

MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: And John, you're next.

MR. DOYLE: Good morning, General. I wanted -- John Doyle, of the 4GWar blog -- excuse me.

I wanted to ask you about amphibious ships. It's no secret that the ideal number for maintaining two expeditionary forces is insufficient. And I just wanted to know where you are on that, and how much does it hamper your ability to operate in the Pacific, and is there help in sight?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. Thank you for that question. John, I got to be honest with you. I mean, I'm a Marine, and, you know, I'm most comfortable when I'm aboard ship, because that facilitates me to do the mission

that I want to do. In the Pacific maritime region, the more ships, the better, absolutely.

Now with the resource, you know, restraints that we have, we may not have everything that I want. I will tell you that, right now, I have everything that I need out there. And I say that confidently, because we are using other assets in roles that aren't their normal way that they were designed to be used. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

We have maritime preposition forces out in the Pacific, and they've been there for many years. And primarily, they're designed to be used in time of crisis. It's prepositioned equipment that we can use, that's already out in the region. We're using those ships now in ways where we're putting Marines on them, and deploying them to participate in exercises throughout the region, which give us another asset, another lift capability that we can use.

In addition to things there, we have new ships, new types of ships coming online. Our high-speed vessels, our joint high-speed vessels are coming out to the region. These give us the ability to transit that vast area that I was talking about, to be at more places, more often, and do the type of engagement that we need to do.

So, you know, when I first started off -- do I want more amphibis? Absolutely. You know, I wouldn't be being truthful with you if I didn't say that, yes, I definitely want more.

Do I have enough to get done what I need today? Absolutely. And I'm optimistic about the future in using the assets that we do have, in ways that help me accomplish the mission that we need to do out there.

MR. DOYLE: Just a quick followup -- General, how many dedicated amphibious ships do you have at your disposal now?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Right now, there are four ships that are forward-deployed amphibious ships -- four amphibious ships forward-deployed in Japan.

There is potential in the future to get more than that out there, but there are other kinds of ships that we also use, and that's what I was talking about -- where it's not just we won't do a mission because we don't have an amphibious ship currently available to do it. We use other ships that work for us just as well, and enable us to do a lot more of that access that's so critically important to us.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, sir.

MR. SEBLEY: And Michele, you're next.

MS. COWELL: Hi, General. Thank you so much for spending time with us this morning. This is Michele Cowell, from *Military Matters*.

I was wondering if you could tell us a little more with respect to the South Korean -- taking care of the South Marina if anything, as Gail mentioned, if anything should arise with North Korea -- where we stand, as far as -- with the Navy -- as far as the Navy coming in, and working directly off of their ships, and where their deployments are right now, within the Marines?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Michele, I want to make sure I understand your question. I mean, you're specifically asking about South Korea and our forces using South Korean ships -- is that your question?

MS. COWELL: Yes.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, that's something -- well, let me answer it this way: There are cases of forces from other countries (inaudible) on U.S. ships, and we're using our ships to facilitate their participation in various training exercises throughout the region.

To date, we have not put, you know, U.S. forces on other ships to do that same thing. However, I would not put that out of an option that we would just pass up. South Korea is one of those countries that has developed an amphibious capability. They have amphibious ships. They have their own South Korea Marine Corps that they put on those ships, and we just conducted an exercise about two months ago with them. Sunyang, which is an amphibious exercise in South Korea, where U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, alongside Republic of Korea Navy and Republic of Korea Marine Corps, conduct amphibious exercises there on the peninsula. We work very, very closely with them.

But using South Korea, specifically, just because they have their own organic capabilities -- they have their own organic Marine Corps -- they're able to use their own forces, and we stay with ours.

But I would just say, it's not beyond the opportunity where we could put our own armed forces on theirs, but, right now, with South Korea, that's really not required at this time.

MS. COWELL: I know when we had provided -- we've spent a lot of time doing special war games with South Korea. And I believe part of that were the exercises that were with Sunyang -- is that the amphibious parts of -- was that part of that, as well -- the special war games that we've participated in through the years?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, Sunyang is a specific exercise that focuses on amphibious training on the Korean peninsula. And that's something that we've been doing with the South Koreans.

But I will tell you that the last one that we just did -- it also had Australian participation, and it goes back to some of the previous questions about how exercises are evolving, so that we can incorporate more countries to participate, instead of the way -- you know, historically, just being bilateral; they're now moving to be more multilateral -- which kind of goes back to your question about putting other forces from another country on a different flagged vessel.

MS. COWELL: Yes, yes.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: The type of cooperation that we're seeing now, in the region -- and this goes, again, to how the region is evolving, and how relationships of countries within the regions are evolving, to allow the things to happen that you're talking about, specifically.

MR. SEBLEY: Thank you, sir. And we have time for maybe one or two questions, so we'll go back around to Rita.

MS. BOLAND: I don't have another question at this time; thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: Roger that. Andrew?

MR. LUBIN: Yes, I do.

General Simcock, we've got Marine rotational forces in Darwin. Are they getting out and engaging (inaudible) countries in the area, or are you giving that to 31<sup>st</sup> (inaudible)?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah, I'll tell you -- thanks for the question, Andrew.

We're currently doing our second rotation of Marine forces into Darwin. I will tell you that our first one -- when it was completed, I had just come out to Hawaii. And the first company that deployed a rotational force to Darwin was my old company that I was a member of 30 years ago, and that was Fox Company, Second Battalion, Third Marines.

And I had the opportunity to talk with that company when they returned from that deployment, and talked with the company commander and a lot of the Marines. And as fired up as those guys were -- they had had good training



opportunities and things to do up there -- but the engagement that they did out in town was really phenomenal.

They did a great job. They hosted some athletic events. They hosted a couple of races. They did all kinds of stuff with the local community that really bonded the locals there around the Darwin area with the Marine Corps.

Now that was the first one. Second one just left not too long ago. They've been there in Darwin a little over a month now -- seeing a lot of the same type of things, where there's engagement out in town. The training aspect of it has been good. Falling right along, the Australian government, just last week, voted approval to move the rotational force up to phase two deployment -- phase one being company level of around 200, 250 Marines. The second phase will be a battalion landing team -- size evolution of about 1,100 Marines, which is just going to bring more capabilities, more engagements, doing more out in Darwin, and taking advantage of the things that we do out there.

Additionally, you know, it's not just landlocked, if you will, to Australia. We do other things. I mean, it's a rotational force that comes to Darwin, and then the ability to move off Darwin, off Australia, to other places. We've done that into New Zealand. We were able to move over, and participate in an exercise with Kiwis. (inaudible) is an exercise we participate with them.

But it gives us the opportunity -- you know, we're in the neighborhood, so to speak, and it gives us the ability to move over, and do other things -- other training opportunities out of Darwin.

MR. LUBIN: Great; thank you.

MR. SEBLEY: And one more question. Chuck?

MR. SIMMINS: Yes. General, could you talk about the redheaded stepchild of the Marine Corps, the Marine aviation? What kind of challenges do they face in the Pacific, and how are you guys meeting them?

GENERAL SIMCOCK: Yeah. Chuck, I'm a little surprised you called Marine aviation the redheaded stepchild. I mean, I'm an infantry guy by trade, but I will tell you right now, when it comes to Marine aviation, my motto is don't leave home without it.

The aviation plan throughout the Pacific is moving along, as scheduled. I think that the thing that most people want to talk about is the arrival of the Osprey, the V-22. Our first squadron has deployed to Japan. It's working out very well. It is a game-changer for us. The capabilities of that aircraft are absolutely phenomenal.

Everyone now is looking at it. People are interested in how they can purchase their own. It has made a huge impact, and we see nothing but continued progress in that way -- and when a second squadron comes in behind it.

In addition, as I'm sure you know, we have the joint strike fighter that will be coming online soon, and will also be employed there to Japan. Our fixed-wing aircraft, again -- as an infantryman -- don't leave home without it -- and the air component of the Marine Air-Ground Taskforce that we need to have out there, that's so very critical in how Marines do business on a day-to-day basis.

The last thing I got to leave you with, Chuck -- because, you know, my boss is an aviator, and if you were to say anything -- I would never characterize any aviator as a redheaded stepchild -- and please take note that, as an infantryman, never leave home without it.

MR. SIMMINS: All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. SEBLEY: Thank you, sir. And I think that's -- we're just running about out of time. So, I'd like to ask you if you have any closing statements you'd like to make.

GENERAL SIMCOCK: You know, the only thing is, first, I would say, thank you for the opportunity to talk to you. I know that the Pacific is literally thousands of miles away. Hawaii is 6,000 miles away from D.C. And sometimes, anywhere outside the Beltway is thousands of miles away.

So, the opportunity to come here, and talk to you about what's going on in the Pacific -- a region that is vitally important to the United States -- I just leave you with, the people that live out in the Pacific and the 36 countries out there -- almost all are very, very interested and very, very reliant upon U.S. presence. The relationships that we've built up over the past, oh, 70 years, I'll say, and, also, those that want to start up new relations with the United States -- vitally important -- vitally important region to the United States.

And your Marine Corps is out there, conducting day-to-day operations in a maritime environment that we love to do, and are enjoying being out there.

So, thank you very much for your time this morning.

MR. SEBLEY: Sir, we really appreciate your time, as well. And to all the blogger online, thank you for your questions, and your participation.

As always, you'll be able to find the transcript and audio file on [dodlive.mil](http://dodlive.mil) later on this afternoon.

Thank you again, everybody.

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